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TO THE

Social Sciences

Presbyterian Congregation of Barrie

BY

THE PASTOR, REV. D. D. McLEOD,

January, 1896.

**"Grace be unto you and peace from God and the
Lord Jesus Christ."**

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INTRODUCTION.

The address in the following pages was delivered to the congregation of our church in Gravenhurst. It was printed in the Canada Presbyterian. The editor of that paper was kind enough to say a number of things commending it to the notice of his readers. Among other things he said, "every point in this address is well taken and well put, it is wise and timely, and if our church throughout its whole length and breadth would only put its preaching into practice, it would be peaceful and harmonious, prosperous and abounding in all those blessed results which the Christian ministry was instituted to bring about." It was my desire to put into your hands at the New Year, some little word of exhortation, and it appeared to me that this address, if it is worthy of being spoken of, as it is above, would be as useful as any new one that I could prepare. You will understand that the form which it takes arises from the circumstances in which it was delivered, namely at the induction of the minister at Gravenhurst.

Yet the statements and principles set forth in it are suitable for all congregations. The editor, before quoted, says of it, that "It says and says well, a great many things which are needed at the present time to be said, and said over and over again."

This language may be too flattering. But not caring whether it is flattering or not, it expresses what I think of the points referred to in the address. Let us not be too sensitive as to how we are spoken of, if only we can do some little service for Christ or His church; and if we have right views about the matter we will desire to think right of his house and his servants. That we may all be of His family and be intimate in His House and of one heart in His service, is my earnest prayer.

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THE CONGREGATION'S DUTIES TOWARDS ITS PASTOR.

In accordance with the custom of our church I have been appointed by the Presbytery to address you on this occasion on your duties as a congregation towards the pastor now inducted over you as your spiritual guide and teacher.

INFLUENCE OF ONE GOOD LIFE

And as an inductory remark, there is one point I desire to emphasize. That is, the influence which is exerted by the presence and work of one consecrated life among any people. The extent of that influence cannot be measured. Therefore the event of to-day in your history, is one of great importance for you and for this community. There is so prevailing a tendency at present in the churches to organize people into societies in order to do the work of God that we are apt to forget, or overlook the importance of the individual life and the influence which one good life can and does exert. The history of the church or of individual churches or congregations, testifies that it has been the devoted labors of some consecrated man or woman that has been the most powerful factor in moulding and elevating the tone of church life. Often such a life has had a transforming effect upon a whole community. Sometime such a life has begun a new epoch in the character of a church or even of a nation.

How great, then, may be the influence exerted for good by a pastor such as you now have. Of good elders, I have often thought what a power for good a pastor and his elders associated with him in the spiritual care of a congregation would be, if these men, whatever their social standing, whether unlearned or learned did only stand fast in Christian integrity, examples in the midst of the people of Christian virtue, discouraging the vices which corrupt society, encouraging and maintaining truth and righteousness in church life and civil life. These groups of Christians living in every village and town, are God's best evangelists, the only kind of evangelists that the world feels the power of. These are the salt of the earth. These preserve that high Christian conscience, which seems to have been lost in this land but which is essential to the wellbeing of any people.

But we are not to think that a pastor's influence is to be felt only through his preaching. There are innumerable ways in which such a man influences a people and does the work of God among them.

OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY. WHAT IS IT ?

When, therefore, you view the settlement of a pastor among you in this broad and spiritual aspect, you cannot but regard with scorn the idea of the ministry which is so common among us, that ministers are mere hirelings of the people, doing certain religious work for hire. Hired to build up a sect. That seems to be the common view. It is a view, however, which does not touch the matter at all. It is of the highest importance, therefore, in the first place, that you should as a congregation have right views of the office and work of the Christian minister. If as I have pointed out, his life among you may be so great a blessing, it is your duty to see that you give him every opportunity to make the most of every talent

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which God has given him for your spiritual up-building, and for the good of the whole community. That I understand to be your duty in this relation.

You have invited this servant of God to labor among you; therefore let everything which would hinder him be kept out of the way, and let everything be contributed by you which will enable him to use to the very best advantage those gifts which he possesses; and, as I have said, in order to this I think it is of the first importance that you should understand what his office is. There are two theories of the Christian ministry which are commonly held among us. There is that theory, which we do not hold, that the Christian ministry is a priesthood. That he by his office is lifted above the people into a priestly rank or caste in which there is some peculiar virtue not possessed by ordinary Christians, and by reason of which there is communicated to his acts some special spiritual value. We do not hold that the ministerial office is of this nature. This is too high a view of it. Too high because it is higher than our Lord assigned to it. There is the opposite view which prevails more widely among our people, that the minister of God is the hireling and servant of the people, to be treated as any other fellow whom you employ. Out of this low view of the ministry rise many of the troubles with which our congregations are afflicted. This is not the scriptural view, therefore not the Presbyterian view, and it is a view which we should seek to deliver the people from. The noble view of the ministry is quite different from either of these. It is that the minister is "the servant of Jesus Christ" and your servant for His sake. He holds the high position of "an ambassador for Christ." He is "a worker together with him" for you. "Let a man so account of himself as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." Such is the high place of the gospel ministry. From which it is manifest that one is his master even Jesus Christ. He receives his authority from Christ. He is to deliver to you the message which

he has received from his Lord and no other. He is not to be dictated to as to what he is to preach, but is to interpret in his preaching the truth which has been committed to him, and because this is true, there is no service, however humble or painful, which the true minister will not be ready to perform for the very least among you. It is the minister who knows from whom he has authority, who takes his orders from his Divine Master, who keeps his heart open to His guidance that is ever readiest to serve the people in every way in his power. Let this view, then, of his office be cherished among you. Be thankful that God has set over you His servant, "to watch for your souls as one that must give account, that he may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you."

WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

Therefore, says the apostle, we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among yourselves. If, then, the first important thing is, that you should think rightly of his office, the second is, that you should think rightly of his work. Some people, they cannot be very intelligent or well informed, think it almost strange to speak of work in connection with the ministry. It seems the easiest kind of business. It does not appear to entail any burdensome toil such as is involved in the ordinary callings of men.

This is a mistaken view of the ministry. It is to be remembered that the minister's work is spiritual. It has to do with the souls of men, with their thoughts and motives, their desires, dispositions and conduct. And therefore it is work that cannot be done in a mechanical way, nor can it be seen in immediate results. We cannot measure it out by the hour. Nor is there any limit to the variety of it. It is done often by the wayside in some unexpected opportunity. It is done in private conversations,

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in friendly counsel, at the bedside of the afflicted, in the private interview in the study, in the confidence of the family circle; in short, in many ways which are private and unknown, except to our Divine Master, as well as in the more public services which seem to constitute the more important part of it.

Nor is it often considered that the best work which you or any pastor could do for his people, would be to give up one whole day in the week to meditation and prayer, in addition to the days of necessary study. But what minister of us has time for that, or thinks he has, or what congregation expects its minister to do that. How few would regard that as his work or as a duty exhausting to both mind and body.

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He can preach a sermon in half an hour, but do you think of the hours of mental toil and anxiety which it has cost to produce the sermon. He can preach it without great effort, but do you consider the wearing of the soul which it cost to preach it in at atmosphere of unbelief and indifference, and perhaps hostile feeling. Do you consider how hard it is, week after week, to observe that that which has cost the sorrow and agony of his soul to make and to deliver, is treated as if it were an utterance of no moment and of no value. Yet all this must be his constant experience and he must not complain nor be cast down. In the midst of the most aggravating discouragement, he must go on with an appearance of cheerfulness and contentment. It is this spiritual burden which wearies and sometimes crushes the heart.

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FELLOWSHIP IN GOSPEL WORK.

Therefore, I say, do not take up or give heed to the thoughtless speech that the minister's work is easy work. This is what I ask of you in view of the kind of work that your minister has to do, that you make it as easy as you can for him, by your sympathy with him in it. Let me emphasize this, sym-

pathy with him in his work. That is quite different from sympathy with him of an ordinary kind. I am sure there will be no lack of kindness on your part towards him. But what I ask is something higher than that. His aim is your spiritual building up. He is planning and working for that. Be with him in that. Let him feel that he has your sympathy in that. Recognize that as the object for which you have called him. Paul the apostle thanks the Philippians for their "fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;" fellowship in the gospel that is what we want.

Fellowship in social life we will never lack, but oh, how many of us long for your "fellowship in the gospel." That is, you as well as he, anxious for a spiritual success. You as well as he, planning and praying for the welfare of the church. You sharing the burden with him. This will make him cheerful in his labours and is the best kind of encouragement you can give him. Further,—believe that your pastor knows his business. The preacher and pastor is the continual target for every kind of criticism, male criticism and female criticism. No class of men is privileged with so much advice as ministers. Remember your pastor is no novice. He knows how to teach you and lead you in spiritual things and will do it in the way which he knows to be the best. No man thinks of interfering with the captain of a ship in ordinary circumstances, and it is well to have confidence in your pastor's judgment as to his own business. Your knowledge may be of great use to him at times. No wise pastor disregards judicious advice or criticism kindly offered. I do not deprecate that, but rather the idea that you know better than he does how to deal with church business. In this I am sure you will not err.

HIS WORK SPIRITUAL.

Remember also, what is so much forgotten, that all the work of the church is spiritual work.

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therefore he has the oversight of it all. He is the pastor over every society and every work that goes on in the church. Many of our congregations forget this or were never taught it. The whole business of the house, from that of the minister to that of the door-keeper, is for the comfort and health of the house, and the house is a spiritual house, and the pastor is the head of the house under Jesus Christ. Remember the extent of his work. He is not only to prepare two sermons weekly and for the prayer meeting, to conduct the sabbath and week day service, to attend religious and other meetings of a public character, to visit the sick, to conduct funerals, to attend to marriages, to be present at the Presbytery and other courts of the church, to do the duty appointed him by the Presbytery, of which there is a large amount; but, further, he has to hold himself at the disposal of every member of the church every day so that he can be called on at any hour to perform any duty required of him. There is no other professional man called on to do so much for the remuneration our ministers receive. How much, then, does he require your fullest sympathy, your co-operation and your prayers.

TIME NEEDED.

Further, give your pastor time to do his work. The deep impression which our church has made in every land where it has flourished, has been made by it because in it men are trained for their work and have taken time to do it and they have been waited on by a people who desired and expected to be fed with knowledge. This has been the strength of our church this has built up a race of men with a steadfast conscience, that in every parish throughout the land, in the smallest hamlet as well as in the crowded city men of learning and ability have been content to spend their gifts in the steady, persevering inculcation of the gospel. Permanent results can only be produced by such work. They cannot be produced and they

are not by the miserable efforts to which we see the pulpit sink in our day to pander to the immoral desire for mere entertainment. The intelligent discussion of vital truth, the interpretation and expounding of the word of God, is the nourishment your souls need, and this your pastor is eminently fitted to give you. I say, therefore, let him have time to do his work. Do not look for the gratifying of a mere idle taste for novelty in the pulpit. Look for the building up of lives, in the principles of Christ, and in the dissemination among you of a genuine and robust faith. Let me further ask you to bear in mind that it is your duty to see to it, that he is kept in a position in which he can with a free mind go in and out among you and give himself to the care of your souls.

We believe that you will devise liberal things on his behalf. This is the true test of your appreciation of His message. Be above condescending to the mean, worldly devices which are so frequently resorted to by those who have no faith in God, for the support of the gospel among you. These devices are utterly alien to the spirit of our religion and only degrade the cause which they profess to support. Of the details of your conduct in respect to pastoral duties I do not speak. You are not inexperienced in congregational life. You have shown in the past your appreciation of a pastor's work. All that any reasonable pastor asks is a just consideration of his conduct. No wise man such as your pastor is desirous to provoke opposition or to neglect any known duty. It is his desire to meet every just expectation and to respond to any reasonable call to the utmost of his ability. I expect and believe that you will meet him in the same spirit, falling in with his plans and rendering him that respect and confidence to which he is entitled.

THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE PRAYED FOR.

Finally, I would fail in my duty here were I not to remind you that in order to your discharging your obli-

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gations as a congregation of Christ's church, in order that you may live up to your responsibilities and privileges as hearers of the gospel, you need at all times to pray that the Holy Spirit may dwell in you and among you.

And you need very specially to pray on behalf of your pastor. That you may do this, your place of business (that is, of prayer) is not only the secret chamber and the family altar, but the house of prayer.

Re found there with regularity and punctuality. The opening psalm or prayer at church is as holy a part of the worship as any other part. God can be dishonored at the beginning of a service as much as in the middle of it. To be found there, then, is the best encouragement you can give your pastor. Do not inflict on him that keenest disappointment, that most discouraging treatment which allows him to prepare for a people who have not come up to meet at the hour of worship.

He was prepared to meet you, you have gone somewhere else. He has kept his appointment, you have not kept yours. You may have gone to hear someone sing or speak in some other church. You have, by so doing, lost one more opportunity of getting and doing good. If we are in another church when we should be in our own, I do not see how we can expect a blessing. I do not see how we can escape the very opposite of blessing. In this direction many good people are derelict. The inspiration which makes the preacher's work tell, comes from earth as well as heaven. It is found in the support and presence of a praying people. Such inspiration it is which gives freshness and power to our services. Therefore, seek this. Remember the cause is yours and the work yours, as well as His. If the Apostle Paul felt his insufficiency for this high work of the gospel ministry, how much more may we who are so far behind him in Christian attainment.

In his words, therefore, I ask that you pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and for your pastor, that utterance may be given unto him

that he may open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel for which he is an ambassador, that therein he may speak boldly as he ought to speak. And the God of Peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant make you perfect in every good work, to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ. To whom be glory for ever and ever, amen!

